

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DISCIPLINE SURVEY RESULTS
June 2003

Educators across the state were asked to respond to the question of whether or not there was administrative support for discipline in their school. They were also encouraged to comment with suggestions as to what Superintendent Horne could do to assist with classroom discipline. Of the 200 respondents, all but three were teachers. 54% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating their discipline was supported by administration, with 46% responding "No." Deep appreciation was expressed to Superintendent Tom Horne for asking for their input. Most teachers expressed that classroom discipline is one of the major challenges facing education. Many teachers also expressed or implied the significant relationship between the environment in the classroom and the learning that takes place.

Perception of Discipline

At least 75% of responses reflected an assumption that student behavior would improve through consistent administration of negative consequences. Teachers were also in agreement that sanctions for more harmful behaviors should be more severe. The nature of consequences was generally not mentioned, although suspension and in-school suspension (ISS) were used as examples. There was also a clear attitude that discipline was the ultimate job of administration, while also holding all parties involved responsible and accountable. Many comments were also made regarding the state of society and students in general as the root of the problem. Respondents acknowledged that Discipline is never the only problem with a given student.

Another recurring theme was the feeling of teachers being powerless, with little recourse, while at the same time taking the blame for all the learning and behavior problems of students. Administration is also seen to have limited power. There is a general feeling that teachers, administrators and districts are held powerless due to parent ability to file suit or abuse such laws as 504 and special education restrictions regarding discipline and mainstreaming. Several comments were also made regarding public schools now being in the "customer service" mode, competing with charter schools to keep up student enrollment. This creates pressure to keep parents happy.

Suggestions for Change

Team Effort

The most frequently used word mentioned by teachers was **ACCOUNTABILITY**. The second most common word mentioned was **RESPONSIBILITY**. Teachers

cannot serve all the needs of students alone and they feel very isolated in their efforts. Their request is that all parties involved share in the responsibility for student discipline. That includes teachers, parents, administration, school boards and state level administration. With common goals and expectations, teachers, further, want to be trusted and supported in their actions.

Parent Involvement

The second most common theme was the recurring mention of the need for strategies to encourage increased parental support and involvement in the educational process. Many teachers suggested the need for parent education to support both learning and behavior. Mention was also made of the need to intervene early, prior to students meeting the school environment, to prevent problems.

School-wide Discipline Plans

Frequently mentioned was the need for consistency of rules and expectations across the school. Secondly, teachers mentioned that the plan should be consistently enforced. It was suggested that a school-wide team, including parents, should initially be involved to create the plan. It was further suggested that a basic discipline matrix should be developed at the state level to give schools more clout in following through. Having high, clear, and consistent **EXPECTATIONS** for student behavior is important to teachers. Teachers seemed unsure of how to go about raising the bar for behavioral expectations.

Teachers also need more planning time to participate in TEAMS to study discipline and discuss problem situations.

Professional Development

Teachers expressed a need for training in the area of behavior management. They also expressed a need for administrators to receive training, along with parents. A suggestion was made to train school board members regarding discipline law. It was also suggested that teachers receive university credit for taking such classes. It was also mentioned that teachers need greater behavior management instruction at the preservice training level.

Alternatives for Chronic and Severe Problems

The general feeling from teachers is that all of their classroom teaching time can be drained by a few severe or chronic behavior problems. A distinction was made between general discipline plans and how schools should deal with more severe problems. The most common suggestion was to develop alternative programs within the school or alternative schools. Other respondents mentioned the need to increase services within the school, such as having a behavior

specialist at each school, or having more social services, counselors, school psychologists and social workers. It was also noted that Arizona does not include "Behavior Disorders" in Special Education funding and perhaps we need a funding source for such alternative programs. One suggestion was made to also have remedial assistance for students, such as Saturday School.

State Level Support

The importance of **statewide discipline standards** and procedures was expressed as something that would be helpful.

Respondents felt a real need to have our **state laws** provide some **protection for teachers** administering consequences to students in order to change inappropriate behavior. An additional problem mentioned was that with open enrollment, students will often "school hop" to avoid consequences. Can anything be done to provide consistency across schools?

Reducing **class size** was mentioned frequently as a way to connect with the individual needs of more students, given the tremendous diversity within a single classroom.

It was suggested there be a **best practices link** for teachers.

Funding for programs for students with **behavior disorders** was suggested, along with funding for additional school supports, such as behavior specialists or vice principals.

One novel suggestion was to have Superintendent Tom Horne create a **pamphlet for teachers to send out to parents** stating the importance of parents backing up the teachers' discipline 100% and to stress the importance of parental involvement in school.

It was also suggested that **all schools need to submit plans** to address extreme cases of behavior, e.g., alternative programs, and that all school improvement plans need to include the school-wide discipline plan.

Some mention was made of the **need to fund school** health, prevention, art, physical education daily and music programs. Students must be physically and mentally healthy to learn.

Again, **sincere appreciation** was expressed toward Tom Horne taking an interest in the issue of student behavior, which is seen as a top priority for enhancing student learning outcomes.

